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2 APPARATUS, SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR ONLINE,
3 MULTI-PARCEL, MULTI-CARRIER, MULTI-SERVICE
4 PARCEL RETURNS SHIPPING MANAGEMENT

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6 ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

7 The present invention provides a computer system (the "System", or the "Return System")
8 that is configured and programmed to provide online stores with a fast, simple, convenient way for
9 eCommerce customers of an online store to return merchandise purchased from that store from
10 within that online store. The Return System provides multi-carrier shipment rating, shipment
11 labeling, shipment tracking, shipment tracking management reports, returns analysis and returns
12 management reporting. In an exemplary embodiment, the Return System has three major
13 components: 1.) A Returns Manager Subsystem that provides a user interface to each Merchant to
14 setup the Merchant's account, setup the Merchant's return policy and rules, and to monitor the status
15 and movement of return shipments; 2.) A Consumer Returns Subsystem (also sometimes referred to
16 as a "Customer Returns Subsystem") that provides each consumer using the Returns System with an
17 online user interface that leads the consumer through the returns process, displays the return policies
18 and rules to the consumer, provides shipping document to ship the return package if appropriate, and
19 permits the consumer to track their return shipments; and 3.) a Returns Processing Subsystem that,
20 in the exemplary embodiment, provides background shipping and tracking functionality. In one
21 exemplary embodiment of the present invention, the Online Merchant integrates the Merchant's
22 online system with the Returns Processing Subsystem. In another exemplary embodiment, the
23 Returns Processing Subsystem is provided as an independent web-based application service
24 (referred to as a "Return Merchant Service System") operated by a common provider. In such an
25 embodiment, the Merchant's system interacts with the Return Merchant Service System through
26 Application Program Interfaces ("API").

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